

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7637

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L NASSAU 2124

FOR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LUERS FROM AMBASSADOR WEISS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, BF, US

SUBJ: FACILITIES AGREEMENT: DISCUSSION WITH BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSIONER

1. PURSUANT TO WEISS-LUERS TELCON OF DECEMBER 16, WE WILL ATTEMPT TO PROVIDE OUR VIEWS ON STATE 294636 BEFORE COB TODAY. IN THE MEANTIME, I OFFER FOLLOWING EXCHANGE WITH HIS EXCELLENCY BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER MENNELL AS INSIGHT AS TO PROBLEM BRITISH PRESENT TO US IN NEGOTIATING AN ACCEPTABLE FACILITIES ARRANGEMENT. MY HOPE WOULD BE THAT WASHINGTON COULD WORK WITH UK EMBASSY TO SEE WHETHER A MORE COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE COULD NOT BE GENERATED BY WHITE HALL ON MENNELL.

2. AT PARTY GIVEN BY SIR ROLAND SYMONETTE, FIRST BAHAMIAN PRIME MINISTER AND ELDER STATESMAN OF BAHAMAS, MENNELL AND I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS ON FACILITIES MATTERS.

3. MENNELL OFFERED VIEW THAT HE WAS UNIMPRESSED BY USG PRESENTATION IN WASHINGTON. "TECHNICAL INFORMATION" AVAILABLE TO BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER INDICATED THAT CONTRARY TO U.S. CONTENTION, MOVEMENT OUT OF AUTECH WOULD SERIOUSLY DEGRADE U.S. CAPABILITIES AND MOVEMENT TO
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ALTERNATIVE SITE WOULD COST FAR MORE THAN U.S.

PREPARED TO ADMIT OR OFFER GCOB BY WAY OF QUID. IN HIS JUDGEMENT, USG SHOULD OFFER TO PAY RETROACTIVELY FOR USE OF FACILITIES SINCE "WHAT IS 10 MILLION OR SO TO USG" AND HE "DID NOT BUY ARGUMENT THAT USG DID NOT HAVE LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE RETROACTIVE PAYMENT". IN SUM, HE WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT HE "COULD NOT SUPPORT U.S. POSITION WHICH HE DID NOT AGREE WITH NOR THINK VALID".

4. I RESPONDED THAT FORTUNATELY IT WAS NOT NECESSARY FOR USG TO PERSUADE HMG THOUGH I REGRETTED HE DID NOT ACCEPT OUR ASSESSMENT. SO FAR AS I COULD DISCERN, QUID FOR RENTAL WHICH USG WAS PREPARED TO OFFER REPRESENTED GENUINE ESTIMATE OF WHAT RELOCATION TO OTHER SITE WOULD COST. I CONCEDED DEGRADATION IN CAPABILITY WOULD RESULT BUT SUCH DEGRADATION, WHILE PREFERABLY AVOIDABLE WAS SOMETHING WE COULD LIVE WITH. I REGRETTED H.E. COULD NOT SUPPORT U.S. POSITION SINCE IF PRESSED U.S. WOULD RELOCATE, WHICH WOULD NOT SERVE U.S., GCOB OR IN LAST ANALYSIS UK PURPOSES. WE AGREED TO HAVE A LONGER EXCHANGE IN NEAR FUTURE.

5. I HAVE STATED FROM OUTSET THAT GCOB WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED WITH OUR PROPOSED OFFER GIVEN ITS INFLATED EXPECTATIONS. FURTHER IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE MENNELL MAY BE CORRECT IN ASSESSMENT THAT U.S. WILL HAVE TO FIND WAY TO COUGH UP FOR RETROACTIVE PAYMENTS IF WE WANT AN AGREEMENT. NEVERTHELESS, I BELIEVE THAT MENNELL'S VIEWS REVEAL HIS STRONG PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH GCOB AND IN PARTICULAR IN SUPPORT OF THEIR NEWLY PROJECTED DEFENSE FORCE. THOUGH I HAVE NO CONCRETE EVIDENCE, I SUSPECT MENNELL HAS ENCOURAGED GCOB TO BELIEVE THAT U.S. WOULD FOOT THE BILL FOR ITS NEW DEFENSE FORCE AND IS CONCERNED THAT FAILURE OF U.S. TO MEET THIS NEED WILL REFLECT BADLY UPON HIM PERSONALLY. HIS STATEMENT THAT HE COULD NOT SUPPORT U.S. POSITION IS ESPECIALLY DISTRESSING BECAUSE I SUSPECT IT REFLECTS WHAT HE IS SAYING TO BAHAMIANS IN ORDER TO INGRATIATE HIMSELF. IF SO, IT MAKES OUT JOB MUCH TOUGHER.

6. I URGE DEPARTMENT TO CALL IN UK EMBASSY AND CONFIRM
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OUTLINE OF WHAT WE PROPOSE TO OFFER GCOB EMPHASIZING THAT THIS IS A GENUINE U.S. ESTIMATE OF COST EFFECTIVE ANALYSIS OF WHAT IT IS WORTH TO KEEP OUR FACILITIES HERE. WE SHOULD URGE LONDON TO SUPPORT THIS POINT OF VIEW NOTING THAT A FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT WILL FACE US WITH PROSPECT OF PULL-OUT AND IMPLIED LOSS OF UK ACCESS TO AUTEK. I WOULD HOPE THEY COULD BE INDUCED TO INSTRUCT MENNELL TO GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO U.S. PROPOSAL

AS A GENUINE ATTEMPT TO MEET GCOB QUID DESIRES BUT
WITHIN WHAT IS REASONABLE IN TERMS OF LEGITIMATE
VALUE OF FACILITIES TO USG. I BELIEVE WHITE HALL MIGHT
SO INSTRUCT MENNELL IF CONVINCED WE ARE SERIOUS JUST
AS THEY REINED HIM IN BY INSTRUCTING HIM, CONTRARY TO
HIS DESIRES, NOT TO CONCLUDE A UNILATERAL UK AGREEMENT
WITH GCOB UNTIL ASSURED THAT U.S./GCOB AGREEMENT WAS
IN PROSPECT.

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